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As we prepare to study the Word of God this evening, let's take a moment to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit as we look forward to studying the Book of Romans this evening. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you as always for the privilege that we have of fellowshiping together in your Word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will make us sensitive to these things and give us understanding and insight and that these truths from your Word will become a part of the resources in our soul and equip us for every good work.

We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen. We've come to a fascinating place here in Romans. We are on the verge of launching into chapter 8. And Romans 8 is probably one of the more familiar of the New Testament passages.

We have our great Romans 8.28, all things work together for good. But I think that perhaps the key verse is this very first verse that we encounter in chapter 8 of Romans. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Paul has just finished in chapter 7, rehearsing the history of mankind under the plan of God. And he's done this, he has personalized it. He has used the first person and he said, I was alive once apart from the law, referring back to the days before the commandment came.

And you can apply that back to the Garden of Eden before God gave the command to not eat of the tree. There was a great freedom from responsibility for decision-making because there was no disobedience that had been defined. It applies even more specifically to the giving of the Mosaic Law, which when it came, made members of the nation of Israel responsible for obedience to God.

Before those lines were drawn and those guidelines were given, there was much that was not held accountable and sin wasn't quantified and measured the way that it was after the law. And so then Paul talks about what life was like in the Old Testament age. And he says, the law is good, it's spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

And he says that what I am doing, that I do not understand. I will to do the right thing, but I'm not able to practice it. And this gives us insight into the nature of life in the Old Testament age.

What was it like to be an Old Testament saint? There was a difference in status. There was a difference in standing before God. There was a difference in the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament age.

It was not universal. There wasn't the indwelling. Christ had not yet come.

And God's point in the life of a believer in the Old Testament age was different than it is now. God was demonstrating our sinfulness. And that's what the law came in to establish.

If we had no traffic laws in Dallas, wouldn't it be great? It would be like driving in Beirut. It would be like driving in a place that is completely lawless. Every man for himself, lean on the horn and put a mean expression on your face and hope for the best.

And there would be no speed traps. There would be no traffic tickets because there's no standard. And so you could say, well, driving in Dallas is really a nightmare, but you couldn't talk about crime statistics or speeding tickets or anything because there's no law.

There's no standard. But as soon as they set a limit and they say 55 miles an hour on LBJ on 635 there, now they can set up a speed trap and they can measure how many people are violating that standard. And suddenly the disastrous nature of the traffic is quantifiable.

And the amount of crime there, the amount of lawlessness is quantifiable. It isn't that people are necessarily driving any differently. And I've noticed that whether they set the limit at 55 or 65, everybody basically hurdles around 635 as fast as possible.

So it doesn't change the way people are driving. And it doesn't change the fact that they may not be driving well or safely, but it does give you a way to quantify how people are driving. And that's what the law of Moses did.

And Paul has pointed this out. And so he says that when the law came, we became aware of the magnitude of our sin and the quantity of our sin. When the law came, sin revived and I died.

I recognized how sinful I was, how worthy of death I was and so forth. And that was great. That was the law's purpose.

And it also established that there was the presence of something that we could not control and we could not overcome. He says in chapter seven, verse 20, now if I do what I will or decide not to do, it is no longer I who am doing it, but sin that dwells in me. And so we say, even when I desire to please God and I desire to live in accordance with righteousness, I can't perform it.

There's something inhibiting me. There's something in the way. And as we covered last time, this is not dodging responsibility and saying, well, it's not my fault that I sin.

It's this sinful nature and so forth. But what it does do is tell us that there's something that we can't handle in our soul. The presence of this sin that's inherited from Adam, the corrupt nature is something that we can't by sheer force of will change and overcome.

And there's an application for that. He's talking about the days when Old Testament law was in effect, the Old Testament age, the age of Israel. But apart from taking advantage of the resources that God gives us today, we can find ourselves in a similar situation.

If we don't take advantage of what God has provided in this age, we can wind up in the same situation as an Old Testament saint with no power over sin, with no power over the corruption

that is a part of our nature. And he says in verse 21, I find in a law that evil is present with me, the one who wills or chooses to do good. Even when you choose to do good, how to perform that just wasn't present.

The power necessary to live in a righteous way just wasn't there. And he concludes the chapter in verse 24, O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death or the body of this death, depending on how you organize your Greek words there. And he's speaking as one living under the law, where the law is an active, legitimate principle.

And we know that that's not the case today. So Paul personalizes this history from the days of Adam through the Old Testament age and all the way up to the present. And he concludes and summarizes that time by saying, so then with my mind, I serve the law of God, but with the flesh, I serve the law of sin.

That was the point of the Old Testament age to demonstrate man's sinfulness. Now in chapter eight, we have each of these words has great significance because he begins by saying, there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. If you have a King James or a New King James, there is an additional phrase there, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

This is a well-known scribal error where a phrase out of verse four was inadvertently copied back up into verse one. And only our later manuscripts have this error. If you go back to the earlier New Testament manuscripts and the best ones, it's not there.

And it's very clear when you look at it in Greek to see how this drifted up. And it's important to know that that is not a part of verse one, that the only people, if that were in verse one, the only people who would have no condemnation were those who did not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. And that's not Paul's point.

This is not operational condemnation. What he's talking about here is the difference between the last age and this age. What was the purpose of the age of the law? It was to demonstrate our sinfulness.

That's accomplished. That's been done. It's been done in spades.

We read the history of Israel through the historical books, the major and minor prophets. It's very clear how miserably Israel failed to keep the law of Moses. So that point has been made.

God has a new point to make in this age, and it doesn't have to do with sin. And that's why Paul says, here's how it was under the law. I found this sin that I couldn't overcome.

Who will deliver me? There is therefore now no condemnation. So the first thing we see here is the word therefore. Based on this illustration that I've just given you, this picture, this painting of the situation under the law, that's why now there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ

Jesus, because that sin element has been dealt with.

The law couldn't deal with it. Jesus Christ's work does deal with it. So he's drawing a conclusion from what he has just illustrated with life under the law.

Therefore, there is now, and now is this present age. You'll notice that in chapter seven, when he's talking about, with my mind I serve the law of God, with my body I serve the law of sin, he never uses the word now, because that's not the case now. A lot of folks want to go to Romans seven and say this is the daily struggle of the believer, the spirit wars against the flesh and so forth.

We do have a struggle between the spirit and the flesh, but that's not what Paul is talking about in chapter seven. He's talking about the historical past. One of the ways that we know this, by the way, is by Paul's use of the personal pronoun.

We say, well, if he wanted to make that clear, why doesn't he just say this is how it was in the past instead of putting it in the present and in the first person? One of the clues we have here is in verse two. He says, there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made who free? Has made you free? Has made us free? What is the pronoun that he uses in verse two? Has made me free. He is still using this literary device or this illustration where he personifies the situation in the first person.

He says, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free now. And so he carries that forward from chapter seven. He says, here's how I was in the past.

Here's how I am now. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Now, if he was just preaching this as the status of all Christians, he could have phrased it many different ways, but this verse two ties back to what he did in the last half of chapter seven.

And he uses himself from the very beginning. I was alive once apart from the law, then I died and I found that I couldn't obey God even when I tried, but now the law of the spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death. So this first person illustration goes through all three phases.

And that's very important because you'll also notice that that's the last time that he uses that first person is in verse two. From now on, he's going to talk about the status of all believers in the present. But before we move through any further, we wanna finish covering verse one here.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. It's critically important for us to understand what he means when he says condemnation. What kind of condemnation is in view here? Now, we have gone through great lengths.

Those of you that have endured through the first seven chapters of Romans here, we have

looked at the ways in which Paul has established that his subject in this book is the Christian life. His subject is not a treatise on salvation. It's not an evangelistic pitch.

He's not trying to evangelize the people in Rome. He addresses them in chapter one as believers and compliments them on their faith and on the good reports that he has had from believers who know them. And then he uses the next several chapters to talk about the nature of the life of a believer.

And it applies to us today. Now that we're saved, how should we live? Francis Schaeffer, a fairly modern day theologian, wrote a book and the title of the book was *How Should We Then Live?* Well, you can argue one way or the other about Francis Schaeffer, but it's a great title because that's the question we should ask ourselves. If I'm saved and I know I'm going to be with the Lord when I die and yet God hasn't taken me to be with him yet, I'm still here, well, now what? How should I then live? Should I just carry on and I've got my fire insurance in my hip pocket and just carry on business as usual? What difference does it make now? What should I be doing or thinking any differently because I'm a Christian as opposed to everybody else in the world who's not a Christian and my life before I was a Christian? What difference does it make? Well, this is the question that Paul is answering here in Romans because there was a great prevailing view.

People in Rome and people in Israel had an answer to this question. These Greeks and Romans had come to faith in Christ and they said, okay, I've believed in Jesus, now what? Well, the Jews had an answer. Well, let me tell you what you should do.

Now that you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you need to start keeping the law. We've got this Bible here. We've got this Old Testament and it's got a lot of very wonderful rituals and requirements and rules that we want you to follow and if you follow these rules, you will be a righteous person.

God will be pleased with you and you'll have blessing in this life. We will respect you. We'll look up to you and admire you and give you great praise and so forth.

This is the standard. And it was a natural conclusion because we figure if you're now saved and God wants you to be righteous, here are some rules for being holy. But Paul is writing this letter to say that's the wrong answer.

Christianity is not a set of rules. It's not an external standard of behavior and we don't say, well, now that you're saved, you need to clean up your life and be moral. You need to be in church.

You need to read your Bible and pray. You need to learn the Ten Commandments and observe them backward and forward. Now, does God want a lot of those things to happen? Yes, He does.

But that's not our goal. We don't wake up in the morning and say, what are the rules that apply to me today? There's a little children's song that I helped to teach children in summer camp. Read your Bible, pray every day.

And it's a rule of behavior. This is what you're supposed to do. And I found that so hard when I was a youngster and I knew I was a Christian and I was in a Christian home and going to church every Sunday.

And my Sunday school teacher was telling me, you know, you need to be reading your Bible. You need to be praying. You need to be holy.

You need to share the gospel with your friends. And it just put pressure on me. It made me uncomfortable because I would sit down and try to read my Bible.

It didn't make any sense to me. I was bored. I would fall asleep in my prayers and then I would feel even more guilty.

And you finally reach the point where you say, you just go to God and say, God, there's got to be something about being a Christian that I'm missing because I just don't have this supposed joy and this supposed peace and this reality of Jesus Christ and so forth. I know I'm saved, but I'm just as miserable as any other boy or girl in my class at school or in my family or my periphery. We're just the same as everybody else.

And I don't enjoy sitting down and hacking through a chapter in the Bible and trying to sit and pray. I haven't got it figured out. And this is what Paul is saying.

He's trying to get us to realize that life as a believer is not adopting a new set of rules. Anybody can do that. You can be a Mormon or a Jehovah's Witness or a Buddhist or a Confucianist or a Muslim or anything and adopt a set of rules that reflects some sort of moral standard and try to live by it.

And of course, all of us are going to fail in the same way because there's no power in a set of rules. That's what Paul has argued here in Romans. There's no power in the rules.

And you can know what's right, but knowing what's right doesn't give you the power to perform it. And that was the point of chapter 7. So he says, because of that, this is what's the status now. Now there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

God has already established that the human race is sinful and He has condemned sin and He did it in the person of Jesus Christ. So now there's a new point. And trying to live by the rules is not the point now.

And we say, oh, now this is dangerous. You mean we can just throw out the rules and do whatever we want and everything is fine? Not at all. But there is a cause and effect.

There is a new way of living in this life that doesn't involve concentrating on rules. And we make a mistake if we impose rules on ourselves and especially if we impose rules on others. And we say, well, this is going to be my rule.

And I will be righteous if I keep these rules. And if I see other people keeping these rules, they are righteous. That's what we call legalism.

That's what we call righteousness by an external standard. And the big problem with an external standard is it can't see on the inside. You can be dropping money in the offering plate and people say, now see, that's a good thing.

You're giving to the church and our church needs money and you've put an offering in, so that's good. And yet in your heart, you can be doing it because you're proud and you want people to see that you're supporting the church or you can do it because you're embarrassed and you're afraid that if you pass the plate by and people don't see you put something in, they'll think less of you. And your motives can be completely wrong in putting that money in and God's not pleased in a lot of cases.

We have Christian meetings where they pass the plate and take up money from unbelievers and gladly do it and scoop that money in and try to use it for quote, unquote, the Lord's work. And it's wrong because God's looking at the heart. That's why the scripture says that God loves a cheerful giver.

He's looking at why we do what we do, not so much what we do. So what is this deal about condemnation? He says, there is therefore now no condemnation. We've just reviewed some of the main themes of this book of Romans and it has to do with the way believers live their life.

It's not talking about salvation, is it? And this previous chapter in chapter seven, I know what's good, I want to do what's good, but I'm not able to do it. This was the struggle of a believer in the Old Testament days. And it demonstrated that even when you choose God, your force of will isn't sufficient to produce righteousness.

Now, living under the law, the law applied to believers. You didn't get saved, you didn't get eternal life by keeping the law, did you? In the Old Testament, the law was never a system of salvation. It was a system for believers.

It applied to believers. You didn't come bring offerings and come approach God and worship if you were an unbeliever. Why would you bother? If you're an unbeliever, you say, well, I don't want to slay my cattle and sacrifice my sheep and so forth.

This was for people who believed in God and wanted to live according to His law. So if you failed under the law, what kind of condemnation was that? What kind of condemnation have we been talking about in the last several chapters of Romans? I want to serve God, I want to please God, but I can't do it. And because I fail and because I sin under the law, I was condemned.

This was condemnation for believers. This was unsatisfactory. This was an F on the report card for believers.

The law demonstrated that for believers, having come to God and had faith in God and trusted God for salvation, we couldn't live in a way that pleased God just by doing works. God wasn't pleased. We've seen many Old Testament passages where God said, you come and bring these sacrifices and offerings and they're a stench in my nose.

I'm not pleased with your burnt offerings and your sacrifices because you're doing it for all the wrong reasons. So this condemnation that Paul is talking about in chapter eight, verse one, is the condemnation that has to do not with salvation, but with righteousness, with sin in the life of a believer. And what is the point here? This is not that there's no condemnation, meaning you're not going to go to the lake of fire when you die.

This condemnation means that we're not under the penalty of the law that says you're sinful, you're sinful, you're sinful. We know that from verse two. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

The law of Moses, who did that apply to? If you were a Syrian or if you lived in Nineveh or if you lived in China, did the law apply to you? Could somebody come over and stone you to death for murder in China because there was a law in Israel? Not at all. The law in Israel applied to believers in Israel and it prescribed the death penalty. There was basically a sin unto death.

There were many sins unto death in Israel. If you murdered someone, it didn't mean that you lost your salvation, it meant that you'd be stoned to death. If you were a rebellious teenager under the law, you might believe in God and you might have salvation, but if you were rebellious, your parents could bring you in front of the congregation and you could be stoned and killed and it was basically a sin unto death.

And that law identified you as a sinner, identified you as a murderer or an adulterer, as an idolater or whatever, and could prescribe death for you. There was a law of sin and death and it applied to believers. It defined what was wrong with believers.

Paul's whole point here in chapter eight is, this condemnation is not salvation condemnation. That's already been taken care of. This is condemnation for sin.

The purpose in the life of a believer now is not to demonstrate how sinful we are. That point has been made and therefore there's now no condemnation. Why? God did this in verse three of chapter eight, by sending his son in the likeness of sinful flesh on account of sin and he condemned sin in the flesh.

This is a principle that we've learned over the years in studying the word of God. God judged sin in Jesus Christ. There's no law of double jeopardy.

Sin has been judged in the flesh. Jesus Christ bore all the sins of the world, believers and unbelievers, every sin. John says, he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also

for the sins of the whole world.

And this changes the way we think about both salvation and the Christian life. Because Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for every sin that's ever been committed. All of Hitler's sins, all of the, think of the worst unbeliever you can think of, their sins are completely paid for.

There's no condemnation left for sin. Jesus Christ has paid the judicial penalty for all sin. So we say, well now, then everybody must be saved.

Because if sin has been paid for, then nobody should have to go to the lake of fire. But think about this. If sin has been completely paid for, as scripture says, and yet people are going to the lake of fire, as scripture says, then people must be going to the lake of fire for something besides sin.

That is in fact the case. We'll see that as we go, we're gonna go back to the gospel of John and see that it is rejection of Jesus Christ that is punishable by eternity in the lake of fire. And if you think about it, this makes sense.

Think about this. If you are choosing between accepting Jesus Christ, paying for your sins, or paying for your own sins in the lake of fire, then what happened to Jesus Christ on the cross and the lake of fire should be equal, right? If let's say Dan and I are in the room, Dan's a believer and I'm an unbeliever. Dan is a believer because Christ paid for his sins and he accepted that payment.

I didn't accept Christ and under this view, I didn't accept Christ's payment, so now I've got to go to the lake of fire and pay for my own sins. Well, Jesus Christ experienced something awful on the cross for three hours, and that paid for Dan's sin. Why can't I go through that same horrible thing for three hours and my sin be paid for? Why is it that I'm going to go to the lake of fire for all eternity? Those two things aren't equal, are they? And not to diminish what Christ went through on the cross, but what Christ went through on the cross is not eternal, is it? And the lake of fire is eternal.

So if I'm going to the lake of fire to pay for my sins and Christ paid for everybody else's sins on the cross, you would think that they would be equally bad punishments. What's the point I'm making? What Christ went through on the cross in that three hours of darkness paid for all the sins of the world. That's what John says.

He's the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. But there is something worse than all the sins of the world, and that's rejecting Jesus Christ. Spitting in the face of God who demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us.

And we say, well, I don't care if He died for me or not. I don't want to partake of God's plan. I don't want to be entered into a relationship with God.

There are many things that separate us from God when we're unbelievers. The judicial penalty for sin is only one. And we've been through the elements of that barrier that separate man and God.

Jesus Christ removed one of those elements, which is the judicial penalty for sin. By failing to accept Christ, it isn't that our sins aren't paid for. Everyone in the lake of fire has their sins paid for.

What they don't have is they don't have righteousness. They don't have eternal life. They don't have a new life in Christ.

They don't have the other 35 things that take place at the point of salvation through faith in Christ. And most, first and foremost, they have rejected the Son of God. And the penalty for that is far worse than the penalty for every sin that's ever been committed on the planet.

Rejecting Jesus Christ is the worst possible thing that can happen in the universe. And the penalty for that is eternity in the lake of fire. So that is condemnation, that we escape at the point of salvation or fail to escape when we reject Jesus Christ.

This condemnation that Paul is talking about in Romans 8.1 is the condemnation associated with sin as a believer. And this means failure to fulfill the plan of God, failure to generate righteousness. And that condemnation is now gone.

We have been set free from the law of sin and death. And we don't have the Mosaic law coming up and saying, look how sinful you are, look how depraved you are, look how far you fall short of the glory of God. The law no longer applies to us.

The law could not do something for us because it was weak through the flesh. But God did it by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. He condemned sin in the flesh so that, what? In chapter 8, verse 4, what was the point? We say, well, Christ died to deliver me from the lake of fire so that I won't spend eternity apart from God.

That was the reason that He died. But that's not what Romans 8.4 says. Romans 8.4 says Christ came and died on the cross and God condemned sin in the body of Christ so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.

So that the righteous requirement, there's something more than solving the sin problem. There's something more than not breaking the rules. Think about this.

If you're a soldier in the military, that you've got the uniform code of military justice. You've got rules and regulations that apply to you. Let's say that you are a corporal in the army and you're on a base and you never break a single regulation.

You never violate the UCMJ. You never break a single regulation. What can we say about this corporal? Are you a great soldier? Are you a great military hero? Are you worthy of all kinds of

adulation and medals and letters of commendation because you've never broken a regulation? There's a difference between not being a violator and doing something positive that fulfills the mission and that counts, right? Being a good soldier involves a whole lot more than not breaking the rules.

It involves doing something on the positive side of the ledger. Being a productive, intelligent, skillful member of the armed forces. Going above and beyond the call of duty.

Dedicating yourself to that worthy cause and so forth. Well, in God's plan, there's something more than not being guilty of sin and not being condemned for sin. God has eliminated that sin problem for us for a reason.

And that reason is so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us. We are now in a position to have the righteousness of God, to reflect the glory of God in that righteousness. And it's a lot more than not breaking the rules.

That's the difference between the picture of Christianity that was prevailing in Paul's day that was being taught in Rome and what Paul is trying to get across in this letter. He says, look, you all are hung up on these rules and you're saying, keep these rules and you'll be righteous. These rules came from God to point out the fact that you've got this sin problem.

Well, God has done that and God has solved that sin problem so this whole rule issue is passe. Your purpose now, you've been freed from that. You've been freed from sin, freed from the system of rules so that you can produce this righteousness.

People in the Old Testament days had only a very limited opportunity to pursue righteousness by faith. Paul says it was witnessed in the law and the prophets. But now it's the norm.

Everyone has the Holy Spirit. Everyone has access to the word of God and your reason for living now after salvation. If you want to answer the question, how should we then live? It's not living trying to avoid sin.

It's living trying to have the righteousness of God, to be declared righteous by God. That's the point. Sin is not the issue in this age.

Righteousness is the issue. And the condemnation that is no longer is the sin condemnation. If we are in Christ Jesus, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death.

The law could not generate righteousness. We couldn't be declared righteous through the law. But we can now fulfill the righteous requirement of the law by walking according to the spirit.

That's the whole point. Walking according to the spirit. So what we would like to do is stop here and just summarize this a little bit.

The idea that this condemnation is no longer applicable is communicated to us through what Paul has built up in chapter 7 and chapter 8. Remember back in chapter 7, verses 15 and 16, he said this condemnation is based on deeds. In chapter 7, verse 15, Paul said, what I am doing, I do not understand. He doesn't say what I'm believing.

He doesn't say I don't believe in God. I'm headed for the lake of fire and so forth. He says, I don't understand what I'm doing.

I am a believer in God. And I don't know why I'm disobedient. I don't know why I'm falling short.

What I desire to do, that I do not practice. This is all deeds oriented, isn't it? It's what I'm practicing. And we know that salvation is not based on what we practice.

Therefore, we know that this is dealing with the life of a believer. He desires to please God, but his deeds don't bear that out. Salvation is not based on deeds, is it? By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Not only do works not produce salvation, but works do not produce righteousness either. By keeping the law, we're not declared righteous. And so this is what he's pointing out.

He says, what I want to do, I don't practice. What I hate, that's what I do. If then I do what I decide not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.

I know that the law is reflecting a righteous standard. I'm pursuing it and I'm falling short. So it's no longer I who do it, that sin that dwells in me.

The law points out this insurmountable obstacle that I have in my soul as a believer. I can't generate righteousness even when I want to. And when he says, therefore, in chapter eight, there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

That condemnation for believers, that penalty from God, that declaration, you are not righteous in your flesh, that doesn't apply to us anymore. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Now, do you notice something in chapter eight, verses one and two? What is the common phrase in verse one and verse two? There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are where? In Christ Jesus.

What does it say in verse two? The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free. That is one of the greatest phrases in the Bible because people in the Old Testament days, from Adam all the way up through John the Baptist, could not claim that phrase, in Christ. This is one of the great problems when you read some of the doctrinal statements of the denominations, who think that believers of every age are members of the church.

That's not the case. Moses was not in Christ. Daniel, David, name any great believer of the Old Testament.

Jesus said the greatest of the believers of this age is John the Baptist. John the Baptist was not in Christ. John the Baptist died before the crucifixion.

John the Baptist is an Old Testament saint, an heir to the Old Testament promises. And he was never in Christ. In Christ, there is no condemnation.

This is something that's unique to this age. And the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. And notice there is a law here.

He doesn't just say the spirit has made me free, does he? He says, what do we know about a law? This kind of reminds me of what we covered a week or two ago when we talked about that we are heirs according to promise. We love that. We go over there to Galatians and it says that we are Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise.

What a great thing. And we think, well, all believers are heirs. But we have to be careful.

It doesn't say we are Abraham's seed and heirs, period. It says we're heirs according to the promise. Well, what is the promise? The promise says that there is a condition for being an heir.

You've got to be obedient. Look at the promise to Abraham. As many as are circumcised are heirs.

And anyone in your household who does not participate in the covenant and reflect that in circumcision will be cut off from his people and are not heirs. And that's why all Israel is not Israel. And you have a lot of rejection.

You have the cousins of Israel that split off and did not pursue faith and so forth. So when he says heirs according to promise, you've got to be aware of what the promise says. This is kind of the same thing.

We have been set free by the law of the spirit of life. What are those conditions? Is every believer set free from the law of sin and death? Is every believer living the life of faith and producing the fruit of the spirit? There is a law. There is a rule.

There is a condition associated with the ministry of the spirit. And when you're in Christ Jesus, we live according to that law. And probably one of the clearest and quickest verses that jumps to our mind is over in Galatians 6. Be not deceived.

God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. This is talking about believers.

You don't get salvation by sowing to the spirit, do you? But as a believer, if you sow to the flesh, you will of the flesh reap corruption. If you sow to the spirit, you will of the spirit reap life that partakes of the eternal. It says eternal life, but we know that that's not talking about duration.

It's talking about quality. So what's our point here? In chapter eight, verses one, two, three, and four, we want to continue in the context. We want to keep track of what Paul is arguing in this letter to the Roman church.

He's talking to believers about the life of believers. And he says, don't let people tell you that you've got to live according to rules. And this makes a lot of us as believers a little nervous.

And we say, well, if we throw out the rules, people are just going to run completely amok. I mean, what's going to stop people from just doing anything they feel like? Well, people do anything they feel like anyway. Trying to impose rules on them isn't going to stop them, first of all.

But second of all, God wants us to learn cause and effect. Do we condone lawless behavior? We don't. But what we understand in this age is that righteousness has to start on the inside and work its way out.

You can't impose righteousness on the outside via a set of rules and try to work it in. Jesus told the disciples this when he said, it isn't what goes into a man that defiles him. It's not whether or not you observe the dietary laws or wash your hands before you eat.

As the Pharisees were accusing his disciples of being unrighteous and lawbreakers because they were eating with unwashed hands. By the way, you can search the Mosaic law all you want and you'll never see a hand-washing ordinance. This was something that had been added by men to the law of Moses.

And so they said, well, your disciples are unrighteous. Your disciples are lawbreakers because they don't wash their hands before they eat. And Jesus said, it isn't what goes into you that defiles you.

Out of the heart proceeds these evil things. And it's what's inside that produces what's on the outside. And that was the whole point of the law of Moses is to show us that an external standard can't produce internal righteousness.

So in this age, it isn't that we're condoning lawless behavior or that we don't want to have any rules. But the point in this age is that inner transformation produces outer righteousness, produces behavior. Which would you rather do? Let's say you want to keep the air conditioning in your house and the hot air outside your house.

And so you say, well, I'll just make a rule for my children that you can't leave the door open. If you go in or you go out the door, you must shut it. The door must always be shut.

And you make that rule. And that's an absolute. You say, okay, fine.

But now you have a trunk full of groceries that you're bringing in from the car. And you open the door and you carry them in and your hands are full. And you say, well, I can't reach back and

close the door and open the door every single time.

It's inconvenient. I have to set the groceries down. And as an adult, you understand what the principle is for keeping the cold air in, the hot air out and so forth.

And you don't bind yourself by that absolute rule. You don't close the door every single time you go in and out, even though that's what you set for your children. And why is that? Because you're beyond the rule and into the principle.

You understand what the point of that is. And there are certain situations where you'll leave the door open and you need to leave the door open. Well, which is better? To try to define a rule for every single thing or to teach people principles and teach them the reason for these things so that you know when the door needs to be shut and when it's okay for it to be open.

It's a far superior system for us to be intelligent and to understand principles and to live by principle than it is to live by rules. Principles can apply in a wide variety of unforeseen situations. If you teach a principle, you can put someone in a new situation.

They can apply the principles and come up with the right answer. But in a new situation, if you haven't made a rule for that, people are helpless. And this was another great thing that was discovered under the law.

And that's why people kept adding to the law of Moses and saying, well, you know, the law of Moses doesn't cover this situation here. So let's create an additional rule. And you wind up with this huge system of rules.

And every time people live a new day, there's a new situation and the rule doesn't specifically account for it. And of course, you can see this in our legal system today that the thing is mushrooming and becoming impossible to get any justice done because we try to create a rule for everything. And it's a manifestation of the fact that we as human beings can't inculcate principles in others.

We can't get everyone to live by principle so we have to try to make rules. But principle is superior to rule and that's why this age is superior to the last. And the plan of God in this age is superior to the last.

We're going to pause here and take our break. And when we come back, we're going to take a look at this phrase, in Christ. What does it mean to be in Christ? Are we in Christ by virtue of salvation? How does that in Christ situation set us free from the law of sin and death? We'll pause and take our break.

And when we come back, we'll answer that question.